

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Wednesday, 11 September 2024 from 7.00 - 9.36 pm.

Present: Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst Chair)

Councillor Louise Price, Christopher Alley, Oliver Cooper, Vicky Edwards, Philip Hearn, Tony Humphreys, Chris Mitchell and Sarah Nelmes

Officers in Attendance:

Marko Kalik
Aaron Roberts
Sharon Keenlyside

LPSC39/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Cox, Andrew Scarth and Steve Drury. Councillor Tony Humphreys substituted.

LPSC40/23 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2024 were confirmed as a correct record subject to all references to Chorley Wood changed to Chorleywood.

LPSC41/23 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

LPSC42/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There was none.

LPSC43/23 NPPF CONSULTATION AND IMPLICATIONS

Aaron Roberts, Senior Planning Officer, presented the report which provided an overview of the proposals contained within the Government's consultation on reforms to national planning policy and other changes to the planning system published on 30th July 2024 and sought approval of the officer response to the consultation in Appendix 1 to this report. The officer highlighted the key changes.

Question 1

A Member asked for the following wording to be removed "It could be It could be interpreted in the proposed new NPPF that constrained districts may be able to justify lower housing delivery targets if they can evidence that they have "taken all possible steps, including optimising density, sharing need with neighbouring authorities, and reviewing Green Belt boundaries, before a lower housing requirement will be considered" (wording taken from the consultation document). This would suggest that the standard method is not, in practice, "mandatory", as alluded to in the draft NPPF".

RESOLVED: that the Local Plan Sub-Committee AGREED that the wording be removed as above.

Question 2

A Member disagreed with the country-wide approach and felt that the first sentence in the officer response should be removed. Officers responded that the labour market and the green belt had little to do with calculating housing need. Officers approach was based around constraint and not being able to meet that need.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the last line be tightened up as the ability to contest the prescribed standard method, due to local constraints, was essential.

Question 3

A Member fundamentally disagreed with the officer's response and felt that the Council should not support the removal of the urban uplift.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the urban uplift should not be removed.

Question 4

No comments from Members.

Question 5

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the word "partially" be removed and the wording to reflect localised areas in the first sentence be revised.

Question 6

No comments from Members.

Question 7

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response be re-worded to state that the Council does not agree with a 5-year specific deliverable housing land supply.

Question 8

No comments from Members.

Question 9

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED to add that it is an unnecessary and had no accountability.

Question 10

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that N/A be removed and repeat the response to question 9 and comment that that TRDC does not agree with a buffer at all.

Question 11

No comments from Members.

Question 12

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that officers check on the wording of paragraph 27B of NPPF and make it clear in the response that cross co-operation must not be imposed upon the TRDC.

Question 13

No comments from Members.

Question 14

No comments from Members.

Questions 15-19

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that officers would re-write the responses objecting to all of them apart from question 18 where it would be stated rental affordability should be a factor in the standard method and reflect the particular local circumstances of the area. Officers would circulate the new responses.

Question 20

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the wording of paragraph 3.15 of the new proposed NPPF be used followed by the rest of the officer's response "At the same time...."

Question 21

No comments from Members.

Question 22

No comments from Members.

Questions 23 - 25

Officers explained that in some responses, they had complained that sustainability had not been mentioned whereas sustainability in location had been referred to. Officers would revise the wording to reflect this.

Members commented on the lack of definition of "strongly perform against the Green Belt purpose", "Grey Belt" and "previously developed land".

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the wording "previously developed land must have had lawful permission" or words to that effect be added to the response and that a clear definition for Grey Belt was required. Rewording was required to include the need for specific exclusions in the Green Belt regarding areas that do not have permanent development.

Question 28

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the wording would be changed from "no" to "yes" due to the error regarding sustainability (mentioned above) and the last sentence from "it may be the case that higher performing Green Belt...." be deleted. It would be repeated that the concept of Grey Belt is too ambiguous.

Question 29

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that it be emphasised in the response, that the purpose of the Green Belt as referenced in paragraph 140 a and b, absolutely needs to be preserved and required in the Local Plan setting process.

Question 30

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the concept of Grey Belt is too ambiguous be repeated.

Question 31

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the wording be reviewed and tightened up regarding viability and 50% affordable housing.

Questions 32 & 33

No comments from Members.

Question 34

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED to incorporate the viability assessments and how this has an effect.

Question 36

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response be reworded and the word “detrimental” softened.

Questions 37 - 45

No comments from Members.

Question 45

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response should include that the Local Authorities are given additional powers to CPO derelict brownfield sites.

Question 46

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED to add that the Council supports the merger of Section 106 contributions with CIL as CIL is not subject to viability.

Question 47

No comments from Members.

Question 48

Members discussed the proposed removal of the requirement to deliver 10% of housing as affordable home ownership. Officers felt that affordable home ownership requirement should be based on and determined by the Councils own evidence.

Question 49

Councillor Cooper moved, seconded by Councillor Hearn, to change the response from “yes” to “no” and impose a 10% mandatory and 25% minimum with officers explaining why. The voting was 4 For and 5 Against. The motion was NOT CARRIED.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response would be reviewed to make the wording clearer.

Questions 50 - 56

No comments from Members.

Question 57

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED to add that the Local Authority should have the ability set the level of Affordable Rent to reflect their own market circumstances.

Question 58

No comments from Members.

Question 59

Members discussed whether the words “beauty” or “beautiful” should be included as the terms were subjective and the definition was problematic. Members suggested adding should reflect the character of the area.

Councillor Cooper moved, seconded by Councillor Hearn, to rewrite the response to support the words “beauty” and “beautiful. The voting was 4 For and 5 Against. The motion was NOT CARRIED.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the wording “in keeping with the character of the area” be included.

Questions 60 – 63

No comments from Members.

Question 64

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that sustainable energy consumption should be included in the response.

Questions 65 – 66

No comments from Members.

Question 67

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED to add that it applies to all forms of infrastructure not just large ones.

Questions 68 – 70

No comments from Members.

Question 71

RESOLVED: to include indoor.

Questions 72 – 77

No comments from Members.

Question 78/81

Members discussed adding to the response that there should be stricter building regulations regarding Net Zero for new builds.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that officers would rewrite the response to include stricter building regulations regarding Net Zero and offsetting for new developments. Officers would review both questions and decide where this was best applied.

Question 79

No comments from Members.

Questions 80/85/86

Members felt that there should be a response given to this question. Councillor Mitchell would circulate information from the Town & Country Planning Association for Members and officers to review.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that additional comments should be added to the response based on the above.

Questions 82 – 89

No comments from Members.

Question 90

RESOLVED: to clarify the figure of £528 and strengthen the last sentence in the response.

Question 91

Members discussed whether the figure of £528 should be higher for some Local Authorities. Officers explained that question 94 related to local variation models.

Questions 92 – 95

No comments from Members.

Question 96

Members commented that it took a huge amount of time and cost to produce a Local Plan.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response to previous questions should be replicated.

Question 103

Members agreed that Local Authorities should not be encouraged to fast track Local Plans.

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the wording in the response be made much more robust.

Question 104

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response be changed to “No” and include wording that robustly states that the proposed transitional arrangements were unworkable and that Local Plans that have gone to Regulation 19, a month after adoption of the new NPPF, would not have to be reviewed.

Question 105

RESOLVED: that Members AGREED that the response to question 104 be repeated.

The Chair thanked Members for their contributions and thanked officers.

The revisions would be circulated.

CHAIRMAN